

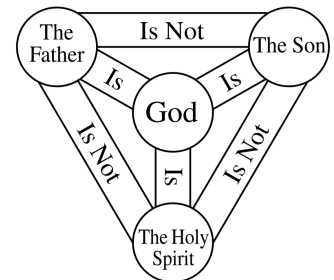
Church Unity & the Wisdom of God

^{2:22} In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. ^{3:1} For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Ephesians 2:22-3:11*)

I. Before the Beginning: United Diversity in the Triune God

The Athanasian Creed:

“We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confusing the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one.”



¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 28:19*)

¹¹ Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one... ²⁰ I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (*John 17:11, 20-23*)

II. In the Beginning: United Diversity in Creatures & Creation

A. Creation

Day 1 (1:5)	Day 2 (1:7)	Day 3 (1:10)	Day 4 (1:16)	Day 5 (1:21)	Day 6 (1:25)
Day/light	Waters above	Dry land/earth	Moon	Sea creatures & birds “according to their kinds”	Land animals “according to their kinds”
Night/darkness	Waters below	Waters/seas	Sun		

B. Mankind: Male & Female

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”
(*Genesis 2:18*)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (*Genesis 1:26-27*)

C. Division Among Creatures & Creation

¹⁷ And to Adam he said... “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. (*Genesis 3:17-18*)

¹⁶ Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. (*Genesis 3:16*)

III. After the Beginning: Division Among the Nations

Excursus: ethnicity, race, and the nations

“*goiim*” (גוֹיִם) = “nations”

“*ethnoi*” (ἔθνοι) = “nations”

NT examples of ethnicities: Jew, Greek, Scythian, Cretan, Parthian, Mede, Elamite, Arabian (*Acts 2:9-11; Colossians 3:11; Titus 1:12*)

A. Babel (Genesis 11)

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and the same words (*then they made the tower and God responded by confusing their language*)...⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (*Genesis 11:1, 8-9*)

B. Table of Nations (Genesis 10)

¹ These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood...

⁵ From these [Japheth's descendents] the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations...

²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations...

³¹ These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

³² These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. (*Genesis 10:1, 5, 20, 31-32*)

C. OT History

²¹ And Elijah came near to all the people [of Israel] and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. [*then Elijah does some really cool stuff where he calls down fire from heaven*]...³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." (*1 Kings 18:21, 39*)

III. The Church: United Diversity, Not Uniformity

A. Unity Within

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 28:19*)

⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." (*Acts 2:9-11*)

¹¹ Here [in the Church] there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (*Colossians 3:11, cf. Galatians 3:28*)

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in **Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were

near.¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the **Father**.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (*Ephesians 2:11-21*)

²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (*John 17:23*)

¹⁶ The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (*1 Corinthians 10:16-18*)

B. Division Without

¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one....¹³ Purge the evil person from among you. (*1 Corinthians 5:11, 13*)

³⁴ Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (*Matthew 10:34-36*)

IV. The Last Day: the Perfection of Unity *and* Division

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (*Revelation 21:3*)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (*Revelation 7:9-10*)

⁶ It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. (*Isaiah 49:6*)

⁴⁶ And these [the wicked] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (*Matthew 25:46*)

Applications

- 1) United diversity is a *product* of the gospel, but it is not the *content* of the gospel
- 2) Unity is both something that we work toward *and* something that already exists

² Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. (*Philippians 2:2-5*)

- 3) Unity is so important that it's worth awkwardness; but truth is so important that it's worth division

¹¹ But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (*Galatians 2:11-14*)

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. (*Philippians 4:2*)

Book Recommendations

- *The Compelling Community*, Mark Dever & Jamie Dunlop
- *The New Reformation*, Shai Linne
- *God Made Me & You*, Shai Linne (children's book)
- *Men & Women in the Church*, Kevin DeYoung